DR. KIDBY AT TRAJAN'S BRIDGE, 1735

BY

E. D. TAPPE

(London)

The appearance of two articles by Mr. Andrei Pippidi on epigraphists and antiquaries in the Rumanian lands [1] encourages me to draw attention to another British traveller of the eighteenth century who has left an antiquarian notice of these regions.

On 23 December 1736 the Society of Antiquaries of London was shown by Dr. Mortimer "a Plan and Profile of the ruins of Trajan's bridge over the Danube, below Porez in the Bannat of Temeswar, upon which is cut the Table containing the following inscription". The page of the Society's Minute Book showing the "Table" and its inscription is reproduced [2]. Dr. Mortimer had obtained the exhibits from Sir Hans Sloane, the famous physician and collector, the purchase of whose collections by the Crown was one of the reasons for the founding of the British Museum.

Perhaps because of interest aroused by this communication, another such communication was placed before the Society three months later. The entry in the Minute Book for 24 March 1737 reads as follows :

"Mr. Nicholas laid before the Society an accurate account of the form & dimentions of the famous Bridge laid over the Danube by the Emperor Trajan, which joined with a rock on the bank of the Danube near a village called Porez, in the Bannat of Tamesware ; of this, Doctor Mortimer shewed the Society a Draught and gave them some account in the Minutes of December 23d 1736. But the description now given by Mr. Nicholas was from Dr. Kidby, who in his passage down the Danube anno 1735 with Sir Everard Falkner had the same presented him by one of the Emperor's Engeneers residing in Hungary. Here are shewen the particular measures of the Butments which he says are composed of alternate layers of Brick and Stone, which with the Peers reach from the Walachian side of the Danube to the Servian shore. The bricks are till this day in many parts remaining very entire, some being 21. 18. 14. &

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[1] Studii clasice, XI, p. 279–296, and XII, p. 241–246.

[2] I am grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of London for allowing me to reproduce these entries from the Minute Book.

St Cl, XV, 1973, p. 157 – 158, Bucureşti

12 Inches in length & generally half that in width, and 4. 3. 2½ & 2 Inches thick, many of which Doctor Kidby measured with his own hand. What is very curious, in this account given in by Mr. Nicholas, are the dimentions of Count Marsili compared with these of the Emperor's Engeneer, tho the latter makes his measures much more large than the Count".

Sir Everard Fawkener — to spell his name as he did himself — used the Danube route on his journey to take up his post as British Ambassador to the Porte. Dr. Kidby's examination of Trajan's bridge must have taken place soon after the middle of November 1735, for Sir Everard's correspondence shows that he left Belgrade on 12 November and arrived at "Rousjouk" (Ruse in Bulgaria), where he left his boats, on the 26th [3].

Dr. John Kidby was the son of Edmund Kidby, Rector of Hanningfield in Essex. He matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford, on 27 October 1713, aged 17, and took his B.A. in 1717 and his M.A. in 1734. In July 1735 he was elected Radcliffe travelling fellow [4]. It was perhaps as a physician that he joined the suite of Sir Everard Fawkener, for *The Gentleman's Magazine* includes in its list of deaths for 1762 "Dr. Kidby, a Physician on Garlick Hill" [5]. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on 3 June 1756[6].

It is to be expected that, as a Radcliffe travelling fellow, Dr. Kidby had an obligation to write a report on his travels. Search has been made at Oxford, but so far no such report has come to light.

[3] British Museum Add. MS 23797, f. 23 : letter of Sir Everard Fawkener to the Duke of Newcastle, Constantinople, 30 December 1735.

[4] J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500—1714*, p. 848.

[5] The Gentleman's Magazine, XXXII (1762), p. 343.

[6] *The Record of the Royal Society of London*, 4th ed., 1940, p. 415.

Thursday 23.d Decemb.r 1736
Present

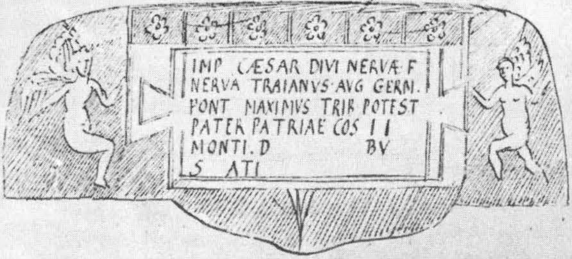
Sir John Evelyn Bar.t & V. P. in the Chair

M.r Nicholas	M.r Vertue
M.r Compton	M.r Cole
M.r Alexander	M.r Papilion
M.r Bowyer	The Rev.d M.r Birch
M.r Holmes	M.r West
The Rev.d M.r Freeman	M.r Folkes
Doctor Mortimer	M.r Gordon
M.r Theobalds	

The Rev.d M.r Curry had leave to be present at the desire of M.r Freeman.

M.r Kyffe had leave to be present at the desire of Doctor Mortimer.

Doctor Mortimer Shew'd from S.r Hans Sloan a Plan & Profile of the Ruins of Trajan's bridge over the River Danube with a Prospect of the Rock on the bank of the Danube, below Porez in the Bannat of Temeswar, upon which is cut the Table containing the following Inscription.



For this the Society returned S.r Hans Sloan their thanks.

Doctor Mortimer brought also an Impression of the Great Seal of Scotland, of Oliver Cromwel cut by the famous Simmons, the Impression in Plaister of Paris, whereon is the